

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4123

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 8299

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: SHUM, GT, OAS
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS; MINI STATES IN THE OAS

SUMMARY. FONMIN WAS TOLD ONCE AGAIN OF GROWING US CONCERN
OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. FONMIN TOOK OCCASION TO URGE
ACTION ON MINI-STATE PROBLEM IN OAS, LEST IT GROW TO SIZE
OF THE NON-ALIGNED "CANCER" IN THE UN. END SUMMARY.

1. AMBASSADOR TOOK DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS TO
PAY COURTESY CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA DEC 9.
AMBASSADOR TOLD MINISTER HE WOULD BE LEAVING DEC 13 FOR
LEAVE IN THE STATES AND THEREFORE CALL ALSO GAVE
HIM AN OPPORTUNITY FO A LAST CONVERSATION WITH THE MINISTER
BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE.

2. MR. LUERS SAID THAT THIS WAS HIS FIRST VISIT TO
GUATEMALA. HE WAS HERE TO CHAIR A CONFERENCE TO US
OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH HELPING TO STOP THE NARCOTICS
TRAFFIC IN LATIN AMERICA. WE APPRECIATED VERY MUCH THE
HOSPITALITY GUATEMALA HAD EXTENDED TO THE PARTICIPANTS
IN THE CONFERENCE, AND THE EXCELLENT REALTIONS WHICH
WE HAD ENJOYED IN GUATEMALA IN NARCOTICS FIELD.
INDEED, COOPERATION WE HAD RECEIVED FROM GUATEMALA IN
THIS AREA WAS AMONG BEST IN THE HEMISPHERE.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS. MR. LUERS OBSERVED THAT A NEW ADMINIS-
TRATION WOULD BE TAKING OFFICE IN WASHINGTON IN
JANUARY. IT WILL REFLECT A CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT
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STRONG CONCERN IN US OVER HUMAN RIGHTS. AS FONMIN AWARE,

ONE OF PRINCIPAL THEMES OF RECENT PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN WAS HOW WE COULD INFUSE GOVERNMENT ACTION WITH GREATER MORAL CONTENT. THE STRONG INTEREST IN FINDING WAYS TO RELATE USG ACTION TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS BEHAVIOR OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS IS PART OF THIS CONCERN. THERE WERE, HE ADMITTED, POTENTIAL CONTRADICTIONS IN THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE: BY CONDITIONING AMERICAN AID ON HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE, WE RAN THE DANGER OF DECREASING OUR ASSISTANCE TO THE WORLD'S POOR, WHICH HAS TO BE OUR PRINCIPAL MORAL PRIORITY. NOR DO WE INTEND TO SET OURSELVES UP AS JUDGES OF OTHER COUNTRIES' INTERNAL AFFAIRS. BUT GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, PARTICULARLY TORTURE, ARE ON THE RISE IN THE HEMISPHERE, AND WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THESE ARE UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES IN ALL COUNTRIES AND A LEGITIMATE CONCERN OF ALL COUNTRIES.

4. FONMIN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD INTEREST OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND HE SHARED US VIEW THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE A VERY IMPORTANT CONCERN. INDEED, PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THE STATE. HE NOTED THAT GUATEMALA HAD ASSOCIATED ITSELF WITH ORIGINAL UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN 1948 AND HAD SIGNED ALL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS IN THIS FIELD SINCE, ALTHOUGH IT HAD NOT RATIFIED THEM ALL. DIFFICULTY WITH REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA WAS THAT PROBLEM IS RELATED TO PROBLEM OF INTERNAL SECURITY, AND WHEN INCIDENTS OCCUR IT IS SOMETIMES MOST DIFFICULT TO TELL WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM. AS WE WERE AWARE, GUATEMALA HAD A NEW AND ACTIVE GUERRILLA GROUP, GUERRILLA ARMY OF THE POOR (EGP), WHOSE LEADERS HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN CUBA. LUERS ASKED IF GUATEMALA HAD EVIDENCE THAT THE EGP WAS RECEIVING CUBAN TRAINING. FONMIN SAID PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE HAD TOLD HIM THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE OF THIS.

5. COMMENT: MOLINA DID NOT SEEM IN ANY WAY EITHER SURPRISED OR OFFENDED BY THE RAISING OF THIS ISSUE, AND SEEMED ENTIRELY SINCERE IN HIS STATEMENT THAT HUMAN RIGHTS WAS AN IMPORTANT AND LEGITIMATE INTERNATIONAL CONCERN.
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6. OAS. FONMIN SAID GUATEMALA IS MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE ADMISSION OF ADDITIONAL MINI STATES TO OAS. HE SAID THAT ADMISSION OF JAMAICA, TRINIDAD AND BARBADOS PRESENTED NO PROBLEM BUT GRENADA WAS ANOTHER MATTER AND WHO KNOWS HOW MANY NEW STATES, OF WHAT SIZE, MAY BE ON THE HORIZON AWAITING OAS ADMISSION. DIFFICULTY WITH THESE COUNTRIES IS THEIR TIES TO THE NON-ALIGNED

COUNTRIES, WHO ARE IN REALITY VERY MUCH ALIGNED. NAC ARE A CANCER IN THE UN AND THE MINISTER WAS WORRIED THAT THIS CANCER MAY EXTEND ITSELF INTO OAS. AS AN EXAMPLE, HE CITED RECENT ELECTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMISSION. JAMAICA WAS A CANDIDATE AND RECEIVED THE SUPPORT OF ONLY THREE COUNTRIES IN THE LATIN AMERICAN GROUP. IT WAS NEVERTHELESS ELECTED BECAUSE OF SUPPORT IT RECEIVED FROM THE NAC. HE HOPED THAT US WOULD TAKE LEAD TO ARRANGE A PRIVATE SESSION OF SELECTED OAS FOREIGN MINISTERS TO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM. OBVIOUSLY IT COULD NOT BE DISCUSSED PUBLICLY; WHEN GRENADA HAD BEEN ADMITTED, NO ONE, INCLUDING GUATEMALA, EXPRESSED PUBLIC OPPOSITION. LUERS SAID THAT MINI-STATE PROBLEM WAS INDEED A DIFFICULT ONE TO WHICH NO ONE HAD YET FOUND ANY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH FONMIN PROFESSED TO HAVE NO OBJECTION TO MEMBERSHIP OF JAMAICA, HIS SUBSEQUENT TELLING OF STORY ABOUT ILC INDICATED THAT GUATEMALA REGARDS ALL OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING STATES AS A PROBLEM, BOTH BECAUSE OF THEIR TIES TO THE NAC AND - ALTHOUGH HE GAVE NO HINT OF THIS - BECAUSE OF THEIR FERVENT SUPPORT OF BELIZE. FOR THESE REASONS, WE DID NOT RESPOND TO MOLINA'S SUGGESTION THAT US JOIN WITH GUATEMALA IN ORGANIZING A PRIVATE MEETING ON THE MINI-STATE PROBLEM.

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